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NOTES ON MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

INTRODUCTION.

Recent events seem to indicate that the interest in municipal affairs has been placed upon a new footing. In the place of intermittent and spasmodic efforts at reform, we can now count upon a continuous and increasingly earnest effort on the part of large classes of our citizens to place the functions of the municipality upon the highest level of efficiency. In order to make these efforts as fruitful of results as possible, it is necessary that the experience of the various cities be placed within the reach of those most interested. It will be the effort of this department of the ANNALS to contribute its share to that end. In this connection it may be well to mention that only such events will be noticed as serve to illustrate the principles which underlie our system of city government. Thus many purely political events must needs be excluded. The obligations of the department to the individual correspondents will receive mention as occasion requires.

AMERICAN CITIES.

Philadelphia.—The estimates of expenditure for the fiscal year, 1895, are at present the subject of discussion in the councils of most of our large cities. The debates upon the various items of expenditure always bring out very clearly our methods, financial and administrative, of dealing with municipal problems. With but little regard to the nature of the particular problem in hand, the estimates of the executive departments are reduced in a purely mechanical way, in order to remain within the limits of possible revenue. Each department is allowed a certain percentage of its estimate, which often means that work of improvement and extension thus done in fragments is expensively and often inefficiently executed. For instance, in the city of Philadelphia, the estimate of departments for improvements and extensions alone was over \$14,000,000. The report of the committee makes this a very suggestive recommendation: "The money available will only permit the appropriation of about forty per cent of the amount asked for by the departments for improvements and extensions." While public works, such as the Public Buildings, park improvements and the like, are in process of completion, such reductions mean indefinite delay and often duplication of the work.

Another very significant fact in connection with the financial methods of the city departments is the communication of the Director of Public Works on the question of street cleaning. For this purpose, the city is divided into five districts; bids are received for each district under the separate items of Street Cleaning and Collections of Ashes and Garbage. The award is then made to the lowest bidder. For the year 1895 the aggregate of such bids is nearly \$100,000 less than in 1894. Ordinarily, this might be a subject for congratulation. When, however, we come to examine the nature of this particular service, it is evident that the low figures will mean inefficient work. The fact that some seven or eight different contracting companies must be controlled and supervised, is sufficient of itself to prove the fact that anything like strict supervision will be impossible. Under another system where the method of street cleaning has been developed gradually, and with due regard to the needs of a great city, reductions of \$100,000 would be absolutely impossible. As the city grows, the requirements of street cleaning become greater, involving a greater financial burden. Were the city to undertake the cleaning of its own streets, the cost would undoubtedly be greater than at present; but, on the other hand, their condition would be far more satisfactory. Thus for the year 1895, Philadelphia will expend some \$750,000 for the cleaning of its streets, together with the collection of ashes and garbage. New York, with a street surface less than one-half that of Philadelphia, expends almost three times the amount, and while every one admits that the work is expensively done, the condition of the streets amply repays what, to many, seems an extravagant outlay.

Chicago.—The report of the Citizens' Association of Chicago for 1895 contains a number of recommendations, to be embodied in specific measures, which the association will have in view in its work during the coming year. An investigation into the Police Justices' Courts, which was undertaken in 1892, revealed a large number of cases where corruption and bribery had played an important part in the non-enforcement of laws and ordinances. The association advocates a complete remodeling of this branch of the local judiciary. Other recommendations include a change in the law regarding special assessments, the consolidation of the city and county governments, the holding of a Constitutional Convention to effect changes in the administrative system of the city, and a revision of portions of the city charter.

Boston.*—The question of a "Greater Boston" seems to be uppermost in the minds of those most interested in the city's welfare. In

*The information concerning Boston has been furnished by Mr. Sylvester Baxter of the Boston *Herald*.

a number of cases the city and surrounding districts are already organized for purposes of general administration. The Boston Postal District includes six suburban municipalities, with a population, in 1890, of 607,063. The Metropolitan Sewerage District includes seventeen such suburban municipalities, with a population of 744,575. The system of parks is in the hands of a Metropolitan Commission, whose authority extends over a district comprising thirty-seven municipalities, with a population estimated at about 1,000,000. Within the last two years open spaces aggregating some 8000 acres have been laid out by this commission, which, with pre-existing parks, give to the district a total park space of 14,000 acres. A plan for a Metropolitan Water District is also under consideration.

With the close of the present year, Boston is to lose the services of Mr. Nathan Matthews, Jr., as chief executive of the city. During the four years of his incumbency the change in administrative and financial methods has been remarkable. The entire executive work of the city has been brought to a new standard of efficiency. During his term of office reforms in almost every executive department have been effected. One of the main difficulties with which the executive had to contend was the great number of executive departments in the city government; still further complicated by the fact that commissions and boards were, as a rule, at the head of these departments, thus making an effective central executive control almost impossible. To completely cure this evil, a change in the form of city government will be necessary, requiring an act of the legislature. This has not as yet been obtained. Within the limits of the powers given to the city by the charter, however, important changes have taken place. Thus, the various bureaus relating to highways, such as paving, street cleaning, construction and maintenance, have been consolidated and placed under the direction of a Superintendent of Streets. A Board of Survey to determine the line of all new streets upon a definite plan was established, which, together with the reorganization of the Architectural Department of the city, means a radical change in the method of laying out and constructing new streets, especially in the older portions of the city. Mayor Matthews has, furthermore, taken a most decided stand against the gas company, which, until within a few years, enjoyed a monopoly in the city. He succeeded in securing entry for another company (The Brookline Gas Company), and finally in effecting a reorganization of the original company. The price of gas was reduced to \$1.00 per 1000 cubic feet in the urban sections. The various gas companies have now entered into a combination, over which the retiring mayor will assume the presidency. In accepting this office, Mr. Matthews expresses

the following opinion on the relation of the municipality to *quasi* public works: "The best manner of adjusting the relations between the community and a private corporation undertaking a semi-public service, is, in my opinion, to secure to the municipal corporation a share in the dividends paid within a certain fixed percentage, and, on the other hand, to protect the company in its business and encourage its development by a contract for a term of years."

The Municipal League of Boston has been doing some very thorough work in investigating various city departments. At the October meeting, a detailed report was devoted to the City Council, and charges of corruption, especially in connection with contract work, were brought forward. This report has not as yet given rise to any definite action, although the same is awaited with great interest. The November meeting was devoted to a report on the police system by the Committee on Public Health and Safety, which was in the main favorable to the department. The league intends to strongly advocate before the legislature a radical revision of the city charter. It desires, in the first place, that the mayor's term of office be extended from one to three years. Furthermore, the abolition of Common Council and the substitution of a single chamber of twenty-four aldermen with three-year terms, eight to be elected each year under a plan of proportional representation. In addition, a Board of Estimate and Apportionment, analogous to the New York board, to make up the annual budget. Another reform which will be urged is the establishment by legislative enactment, of a "Board of Visitors" for public institutions, the City Council having refused to authorize such a board, notwithstanding the fact that abuses in management have been proven by a special board of visitors appointed to look into the matter.

Various commercial organizations of the city are inquiring into the advisability of establishing a system of municipal wharves and docks, the advantages to other seaports through such ownership being no longer a matter of doubt.

Omaha.*—The newly elected Legislature of Nebraska, which commences its biennial session in January, 1895, will have before it, as one of the most important questions, the reform of the charters of cities of the Metropolitan class, under which Omaha is incorporated. In anticipation of this, a Charter Revision Committee consisting of prominent citizens selected by the Mayor and City Councils has been busily engaged for six or eight weeks formulating desirable amendments to the charters of cities of this class. The attention of this committee

* The information concerning Omaha has been furnished by Victor Rosewater, Ph. D., of that city.

has been chiefly directed toward the reform of the system of assessment and the consolidation of the city departments.

In September of this year the Mayor of Omaha was subjected to impeachment proceedings. Charges had been preferred in the District Court by two City Councilmen, alleging that the Mayor had received large benefits under certain purchases of real estate for park purposes, that he had conspired with gamblers to infringe the criminal code and that he had violated the law in neglecting to make certain appointments. The impeachment proceedings which, it seems, were begun in the interests of certain contractors whose warrants the Mayor had refused to sign, have resulted in the complete exoneration of the executive. One cause of the dispute—the electric lighting service has just been compromised. Up to the present time the city has been paying from \$140 to \$175 per lamp (arc-light) per year. The new contract calls for an all-night service, gauged, not by candle-power, but by voltage, at the rate of \$120 per lamp per year for not less than 200 nor more than 400 lamps.

Chattanooga.—The annual report of the Mayor of Chattanooga for 1894 contains some extremely interesting information concerning the changes which have taken place in the government of the city during the fiscal year 1893-1894. At the time of installation of the present mayor, the financial condition of the city was extremely unfavorable. With a population of but 45,000, a funded indebtedness of over \$900,000 and a floating indebtedness of an additional \$100,000, the expenses of the government were increasing beyond the possibilities of revenue.

The first reform which the Mayor had in view was strict economy in administration, especially as regards salaries. In the department of the City Executive alone, the salary list was reduced from \$16,621 in 1892 to \$5610 in 1894; the number of officials from twenty-three to nine. This is exclusive of the Board of Public Works, the Board of Aldermen, the police force, the tax assessors, where financial reforms of a sweeping character were introduced, all tending to make the financial control over expenditures more effective.

The office of Delinquent Tax Collectors was abolished, and the collection of all taxes placed in the hands of the City Treasurer and the Tax Collector.

The strict economy exercised in all departments of the city government is illustrated by the comparison of the total ordinary expenditures for the last four years.

1890-91,	\$302,144 45
1891-92,	274,344 40
1892-93,	236,136 09
1893-94,	201,076 74

During the same period the tax levy was reduced from \$1.80 to \$1.25.

Although it is neither possible nor even desirable that this reduction of expenditures should continue, the city has now been placed upon such sound financial basis that future increase in expenditure, unhampered by the extravagance from which it has hitherto suffered, will mean cleaner streets, better sewers, and a mass of other necessities and conveniences which have heretofore been neglected.

FOREIGN CITIES.

London.—The reports of the chairman and committees of the London County Council for the year ending March 31, 1894, contain much interesting and valuable information concerning the growth and development of the new County Council Government. The gradual extension of functions through special authorizing acts of Parliament is significant of the change which is gradually taking place in London city life. While still hampered by a lack of sufficient power to carry into effect a number of necessary improvements, a great deal has been accomplished toward giving to this vast area a united and responsible government. The unsatisfactory financial condition of the city is due, mainly, to the fact that the funded debt, amounting to some \$165,000,000, represents for the most part financially unproductive public enterprises, such as drainage, parks, street improvements, etc. The liquidation charges alone amount to \$2,500,000 annually. The total expenditure of the Council for the year 1893-94 amounted to \$20,000,000, of which \$5,000,000 was covered by new loans. The main expenditure was incurred for streets and highways, schools and charitable institutions.

The reports of the Taxation Committee show the rate of taxation to be 13 *d.* in the £, which is comparatively low considering the nature of the services rendered. The Park Committee furnishes interesting statistics of the London parks, showing a remarkable increase since the new County Council came into power. In 1889 the number of parks was forty, with an area of 2256 acres; in 1893 there were seventy-eight, with an area of 3665 acres.

An interesting part of the report of the Public Works Committee deals with the work done directly by the Council in street paving and repair. It seems to be the settled purpose of the Council to do as little work as possible through contractors. While the chairman admits that much of the work, especially that connected with street cleaning, might be done more cheaply through the contract system, the efficiency of the service is so far above anything to be obtained through private individuals, that economy is the result in the long run.

Two interesting special reports deal with the questions of "Dust Destructors" and "Technical Education." The former has been compiled by the medical officer and engineer of the London County Council, and reviews the experience of Manchester, Birmingham, Bradford, and a number of smaller boroughs. The difficulty of disposing effectively of the city's refuse seems to baffle solution. The most difficult problem seems to be to render the organic matter innocuous and at the same time utilize the product for industrial purposes. Until this is done the disposal of garbage and refuse will be an extremely expensive operation. There are about forty urban centres (cities and sanitary districts) in England where the method of disposal by means of furnaces has been substituted for the more primitive systems. In none, however, has the experience been perfectly satisfactory. The recent experiments in some of our American cities show a decided improvement on English methods.

The report on "Technical Education" reviews the work done by the Council in this line. It consists mainly in the granting of support and the founding of scholarships to the various non-board schools. During the year 1893-94 some 228 such school scholarships were awarded. The special grants from the County Council entitle the London School Board to representation on the governing bodies of these institutions. The amount expended in such grants was nearly \$150,000.

Berlin.—Some few of the administrative reports for the fiscal year 1893-94 have appeared, treating in detail the work done by the various departments. The report on street cleaning offers special interest as showing the admirable organization of this department and its ready adaptability to the changing needs of the community. The general control is exercised by a committee composed of four members of the Board of Aldermen (the real executive of the city) and eight members of the Town Council. At the head of the department is the Director of Street Cleaning who is directly responsible to the committee. Under him, as executive officials, are one inspector, one administrator, six chief superintendents and twenty-three ordinary superintendents. These are all specially trained officials, holding office during good behavior. The work of street cleaning is done by some 842 regularly employed laborers who are regarded as city officials, also holding office during good behavior. In case of sickness or accident they continue to draw from the city treasury a certain proportion of their wages and after a certain term of service are pensioned by the city. The average wage is about ninety cents per day. In addition a large number of temporary laborers are added as occasion requires. All those engaged in the work of street cleaning receive a

uniform from the city, which gives to the street-cleaning corps an appearance of tidiness and cleanliness which is in direct contrast with the set of men we are accustomed to see at work on our streets. The department also undertakes the cleaning of the sidewalks and during the summer months the sprinkling of all streets. Main thoroughfares are thoroughly cleansed at least once and often several times each day. Streets paved with asphalt are first flushed with water and then thoroughly scraped by means of rubber scrapers.

The total expenditure of the department for the year 1893-94, including the cleaning of all streets and sidewalks, street sprinkling, garbage collection and disposal and public conveniences, was \$542,850. When we stop to consider that there is no other city in the world—not excepting Paris—where the streets are kept in such irreproachable condition, this expenditure is remarkably low.

GENERAL NOTES.

The National Municipal Reform League, organized as a result of the Conference for Good City Government held in Philadelphia in January, 1894, has just published the first two of a series of pamphlets dealing with questions of municipal administration and finance. They are both of an introductory character, stating the objects of the league and discussing general questions of municipal reform.

Pamphlet No. 1 contains "City Government and the Churches,"* by the Rev. Charles F. Dole, and a short article by Mr. Charles Richardson, vice-president of the league, on "What a Private Citizen can do for Good City Government."

Pamphlet No. 2 † contains "An Address to the People," by Charles J. Bonaparte, Esq., and a reprint of Mr. Richardson's article. Mr. Bonaparte, in his introduction, sums up the situation in concise form when he says: "No adequate remedy for these evils can be expected from an improvement in the mere machinery of government. Sooner or later every community obtains as good a government as it deserves. Our cities are misgoverned because our citizens are unworthy. By some means, the whole tone of public opinion, the accepted standards of political thought and conduct, must be raised. To do this, and do it permanently and effectually, will be the work of time and labor."

National Conference for Good City Government.

The Second Conference of the National Municipal Reform League was held in Minneapolis on the eighth and tenth of December, 1894.

* Philadelphia, 1894. 12 pages.

† Philadelphia, 1894. 14 pages. Both pamphlets can be obtained by application to C. R. Woodruff, Esq., 514 Walnut street, Philadelphia.

The first session was opened on the morning of the eighth by Vice-President Charles Richardson, of the National League, who made a few remarks upon the general nature of the reform movement. Mr. Charles L. Crocker, President of the Minneapolis Board of Trade, followed with a brief sketch on the relation of the city to this reform movement. The formal address of welcome was made by Mayor Eustis, of Minneapolis, Professor Edmund J. James, of the University of Pennsylvania, responding in the name of the visitors. Mr. George Burnham, Jr., of Philadelphia, was chosen President of the Conference. The regular session was opened by D. F. Simpson, Esq., Corporation Counsel, of Minneapolis, with a paper on "The Scheme of Government in Operation in this City," in which the charter provisions were examined in detail; the results of their operation being freely commented upon. This paper was followed by a series of reports on the "Results Obtained by Voluntary and Temporary Movements." The first of these was made by Mr. William G. Low, of New York. Mr. Low commented at length upon the reform movement in New York City; he reviewed the work done by the Rev. Dr. Parkhurst, and the present position of the Committee of Seventy. Special emphasis was laid upon the fact that party affiliations must be disregarded in the work of reform. "So far as my experience goes," he said, "our municipal gains have usually taken place when men have thus forsaken party lines and, independently thereof, worked for the civic good. In order, however, that the results obtained should be permanent, it is necessary that the temporary voluntary movements acquire some permanent character."

Mr. Low was followed by Herbert Welsh, Esq., of Philadelphia. Mr. Welsh commented at length upon the position which the local Municipal Leagues must occupy in the work of reform. There must be a concerted effort to replace the apathy and ignorance of the great mass of citizens by an intelligent and active interest in local problems. The necessity of permanent organization was thoroughly discussed.

The Afternoon Session was occupied by the reading and discussion of a paper of Professor Jeremiah W. Jenks, of Cornell University, on "Proportional Representation and Municipal Reform."

The Monday Morning Session (December 10) was devoted to a paper by Professor Edmund J. James, of the Wharton School of Finance and Economy, University of Pennsylvania, on "The Elements of a Good City Charter." In the introductory portion of the paper, Professor James took occasion to correct a mistaken impression as to the purport of his remarks at the New York city meeting last May. The description there given of American city government at its worst was intended for the city of New York under the Tweed ring, and not

in any sense to be applied to Philadelphia. On the contrary, the new Charter of 1885 marked a notable step in advance in our methods of city government. The framing of a model city charter is dependent upon local conditions, and thus no hard and fast rules can be laid down as applicable to cities in general. While in some respects European cities stand far above their American counterparts as regards the efficiency of their administration, in others, again, we can claim superiority. Modern cities cannot be governed, in the long run, except upon the basis of universal suffrage, popular representation and popular control. This combination is to be found in no European city. Their present form of administration is sure to break down upon the introduction of universal suffrage into their political system. As regards the elements of a good city charter, Dr. James lays down the following principles :

First, "Such a charter should give the greatest possible amount of self-government to the community." This should include (1) the right to frame its own charter, (2) independence and freedom from State control, either legislative or administrative, so far as purely local questions are concerned. Until this is done, no opinion can be expressed upon the success or failure of democracy in city government."

Secondly, "The executive and legislative authorities of the city must be clearly differentiated, and as far as possible vested in different bodies."

Thirdly, The executive department should be organized on the sound basis of permanent civil service under the direction of a mayor elected by the people for not too short a term.

Fourthly, "The legislative body should consist of two divisions ; the most numerous consisting of representatives, chosen by districts (wards, etc.) ; the smaller body on a general ticket with a method of cumulative voting."

With this truly representative and democratic form of government, the American cities will have "adequate machinery for the expression of our civic life." The result would be a great improvement in our city governments.

Among the other speakers at the meeting were Mr. George Frederick Elliott, President of the Law Enforcement Society of New York ; Mr. Charles J. Bonaparte, of Baltimore ; Mr. W. H. Lightner, of St. Paul ; Hon. E. J. Blandin, of Cleveland ; Gen. F. C. Winkler, of Milwaukee ; and Mr. J. H. Dana, of Denver.

The appearance of a new monthly journal, devoted to municipal and county problems, meets a want which has long been felt in our periodical literature. The first two numbers of the *Municipality and*

*County** contain a mass of interesting facts concerned mainly with the public works of various cities in the United States.

In the first number, the proceedings of the first meeting of the American Society of Municipal Improvements, which met in Buffalo in September of this year, are reported. Other articles deal with the water supply in cities, street paving, garbage collection, taxation, etc. The new publication promises to be of great value to the officials in various cities who are anxious to obtain information concerning the experience of other localities in dealing with similar problems, as well as to others interested in municipal problems.

The series of conferences in the interest of Good City Government, held in New York City during the winter of 1893-1894, under the auspices of the City Vigilance League, have proved so successful in awakening public interest in local questions, that the Executive Committee has determined to arrange a similar program for present winter. The large number of prominent speakers, including such men as the Rev. Drs. Charles H. Parkhurst and Lyman Abbott, Hon. Andrew H. Green, Professors Franklin H. Giddings and Edwin R. A. Seligman, Richard Watson Gilder and William Dean Howells, ensures equal, if not greater, success. In the series of fourteen conferences, almost every subject relating to the municipal life of a great city is to receive attention. Education, police, taxation, health, transportation, recreation and the various social problems which confront New York City, will be treated by recognized authorities in these subjects. The Conferences are held on alternate Thursday evenings in Amity Building (312 West Fifty-fourth street). It is to movements such as these that we must look for the development of such an interest in municipal affairs, as will render possible the solution of the many difficult and complicated problems of our great cities.

* *Municipality and County*—a monthly journal of practical information for municipalities and counties, and parties dealing with the same. A. B. Kellogg, Editor, Niagara Publishing Company, 202 Main street, Buffalo, N. Y.